

FREE PARDON NO. 1142

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake,
and will not remember your sins.”*
Isaiah 43:25.

THIS extraordinary passage is rendered the more remarkable from its context, for it follows a description of the sins of God's people, a description which mentions their sins of omission in that they had neglected the service of the Most High, and their sins of commission in that they had gone so far in breaking God's law that they had even wearied Him with their iniquities. There is the charge, a thousand facts prove it, and nothing can be urged by way of extenuation. We might expect that the next utterance would be the sentence, and the next motion of the divine hand would be the execution. But, instead of that, O wonder of wonders—(Who is a pardoning God like unto You, O Jehovah?)—there comes a full remission, a complete absolution—“I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions.” The verse is succeeded, moreover, by other sentences which go on, still further, to convict the people of great sins. The Lord asks them to come and plead with Him, if they can. If they have anything to say in extenuation of their faults, He gives them an opportunity of speaking for themselves. And then He tells them that they had sinned as a nation from their very beginning, and had continued still to sin. Though the Lord knew that He would add those words of expostulation, He made a break and a pause in the very middle of His righteous accusation, and before He had concluded His charge against them, He had already forgiven them, and said, “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake.” The remarkable point is not merely that the absolution contained in the text is preceded and succeeded by verses of accusation, but that it breaks in upon the context, and cleaves the sense right in the middle. The King's messenger of mercy rides through the ranks of the men-at-arms in hot haste, sounding his silver bugle as he clears his way. He cannot linger, his message is too precious to be made to tarry. Sooner may sun and moon stand still than mercy be hindered. Such breaks as those, of which the text is a specimen, are very precious to me because they show the intense love of God to deeds of grace, and His eagerness to perform them. I love these soft showers of grace and mercy all the more because they so abruptly interpose between the tremendous peals of thunder of well-deserved wrath.

It will be our wisdom not only to weigh the text, but to notice the practical lesson of its context, namely, that since God is sure to reveal His mercy when it will be most valued, we may conclude that men know and prize divine mercy most when they most feel the weight of their sins. Until a man is consciously condemned and pleads guilty, he will not ask for mercy. And if mercy were to come to him, he would treat it with disdain. He would look upon the offer of forgiveness as an insult, for what better would it be than an insult to pardon an innocent man? As well send medicine to a man who was never sick, or alms to a millionaire. We must be proven guilty, and confess it, before we can be forgiven. We must know that we are sick, and we must distinctly recognize that our sickness is a mortal disease, or else we shall never value the divine medicine which Jesus came to bring. A sense of sin, although it is exceedingly painful, is a most blessed thing, and I pray God, if you have never felt how guilty you are, that you may be made to feel it at once. If you have never been broken down before the awful majesty of divine justice, may the Holy Spirit break you down now, for Jesus will never clothe those who are not stripped. He will never wash those who are not foul, nor will He attempt to heal those who are not wounded. Others may spend their strength in flattering human goodness; the Lord Jesus has come on another errand, and deals only with our sin and misery. If you are not poverty-stricken, you will have no dealings with the blessed soul-enriching Savior.

Having thus considered the context, let us notice two other points. The first is *the nature of the pardon which is here so graciously proclaimed*; and the second is *the effect which this pardon produces upon the minds of those who are enabled to receive it*.

I. First, dear friends, let us carefully notice THE NATURE OF THE PARDON WHICH IS HERE SO GRACIOUSLY ANNOUNCED. “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins.”

1. Note, first, *it is a pardon from God Himself*, whereupon we further observe that it is a pardon *from Him who is offended*. Sin is mainly an attack upon God. It is an offense against His own most excellent person; it is treason against His most glorious sovereignty. God therefore feels more, sees more, and is more thoroughly affected by the evil of sin than anyone else. And the context of the text shows that He does not treat sin as a trifle as some do—that He does not regard it as a thing which can be readily passed over, but takes solemn note of the sinful omissions and commissions of His people, and in due time calls them to account, mentioning their sins in a way which shows that He is sorely displeased. Sin is, in Jehovah’s eyes, exceedingly sinful, an abominable thing which His soul hates. And yet, notwithstanding this, it is the very same God who has such a hatred of sin who, nevertheless, says, “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions.” We have offended God, and the same offended God forgives us. We have violated His law, and yet the lawgiver Himself, pardons us. We have insulted His majesty, and yet the King Himself, deigns to say, “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions.”

This is the more delightful because we know that *only He could forgive*. What is the use of forgiveness from one who has not been offended? How can I forgive you for a transgression which you have committed against another person? He, alone, whose law has been broken, and who is both the fountain of justice, and the executive of the law, is able to forgive committed offenses. Power to forgive resides nowhere but in the great Supreme, but then, if you obtain pardon from Him, *it is pardon* beyond question. If some man, like yourself, who takes upon himself to say that he has received a commission from heaven, shall absolve you, it is not worth the breath he spends in uttering the mimic absolution, or the time you waste in listening to it. But if the Lord Himself, out of His excellent glory, says, “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions,” then, indeed, the pardon is divinely precious and effectual. There is reality in divine forgiveness. It is no dream or fiction of the imagination. Whom God forgives, who can condemn? This led the apostle Paul to say, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifies; who is he that condemns?” Deep is the peace which the Lord’s own absolution brings to the soul. If He has said to the greatest offender, “I forgive you,” what more is needed? What is the use of adding ceremonies and rituals, and the like, if the Lord, Himself, has spoken? One word from the lips of Jehovah, the great forgiving God, is worth millions of “masses,” and billions of indulgences from the Pope himself. Our conscience demands no more than pardon from the Lord, and it will never rest satisfied with anything less. O Lord, against whom we have erred, Your own sure Word of grace contents us, but without that Word, spoken home to us by Your Spirit, our heart continues to condemn us, and we pine away in our sins.

Brethren, there is something about the character of God which is not always dwelt upon as it should be, which tends to make His forgiveness more full of consolation to the soul. There are many idolaters in the world besides those who worship blocks of wood and stone. There are men who would scorn to be called idolaters, who, nevertheless, are not worshippers of the true God, but followers of a deity of their own making. They have not made him with wood, or clay, or gold, or silver, but they have fashioned him out of their own conceptions. They believe in a god such as they think God ought to be and according to the general rule and fashion nowadays, the god whom men invent for themselves is a being entirely devoid of justice. They say that the God of the Bible, (who is the real, living, and true God who made the heavens and the earth), is vindictive because He severely punishes rebellion against His law. Because, being at the head of all moral government, He will not allow His law to be trampled on with impunity, and will by no means spare the guilty. The God who executes vengeance and terribly rewards the proud doer is not the God for men of the modern school. They want an easier deity, a far less stringent governor. They want a god of as easy virtue as themselves. The Lord God of Elijah will never suit the fair-spoken Ahab of this age who cry, “Peace, peace,” where there is no peace. He was never beloved

by proud and carnally-minded men. They set up an effeminate deity of their own who is like themselves, who cares nothing about the evil of sin, and will wink at it, and will allow sinners to go unpunished—a god who does their bidding, for he quenches the fires of hell, or renders it only a transient punishment for a few years. Theirs is a god who gives them license to think as they like, and treat his word as a roll of cloth for them to cut according to their own fashion. The god of modern thought is not the God of the Bible; neither is he any more the true God than Baal or Ashtoreth, Jupiter or Apollo. The true God is the God who is revealed in the Scriptures, and manifested in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is known only to those, to whom He reveals Himself and the rest, by their own carnal wisdom, are blinded so that they have not seen Him, neither know Him. Now, I say it here, that if there were a god whose nature was nothing else but gentleness, and who, therefore, winked at sin, his pardon would never have satisfied my conscience, for when my conscience was awakened to know the evil of sin, I felt that if God did not punish me, He ought to. There was about my heart this feeling that my sin ought not to go unpunished. In fact, I punished myself for my sin by the deep convictions, fears, and trembling of my soul. And if anyone had said God blots out the sin, and thinks no more of it, the assurance would have given me no peace. I would have felt that there was an injustice involved in my being pardoned. My sin would still have cried for vengeance, and therefore my conscience would have had no peace. But when I came to understand that the God of the Bible would not pass by sin without first vindicating the honor of His moral government; that He would not permit sin to be trifled with and to go unpunished, and that, therefore, He, Himself, in the person of His own Son, had suffered the penalty for my sin, then I said, “This is the kind of pardon which I need; a pardon which satisfies God’s justice, and, therefore, satisfies my own instincts of right. The bearing of my sins by the Lord Jesus in His own body on the tree makes me feel perfectly content, for now God, Himself, can bring no charge against me, since He cannot punish me for that which He laid upon His own Son.” Shall He demand payment twice for one debt, or punish twice for one offense? If my sins were laid upon His Son, then is His justice abundantly satisfied, and my soul accepts the free pardon which He gives, without a fear that the strictest justice will ever pronounce my pardon null and void. Now, when God, even Jehovah, the Jehovah of this book, says, “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions, I who thundered from the top of Sinai, I who drowned Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, I who smote Sennacherib with all his armies, I, the just and terrible God, who revenges and is furious, and whose anger burns like fire against sin, I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions,” this is a glorious word, indeed. “A just God and a Savior.” “Just and yet the justifier of him that believes.” Oh, here is a solid foundation for the heart, the conscience, the entire man to rest upon! This is pardon which weighs well in the scales of judgment, and is not mere wind. This is pardon which acts as balm to the wounds of conscience, and breathes life into hearts dying of despair.

So, you see, there is much in the fact that the pardon comes from God. But I have not brought it all out yet, for remember, beloved, that inasmuch as it comes from God, *He alone, knows the full extent of sin*, and there can be no pardon given for a sin which has not been recognized somewhere or other. It might be that pardon would only reach to a part of the offense through the ignorance of the person offended, supposing him to be a fallible, finite being. And though he forgave the wrong done, as far as he knew it, yet he might soon wake up to a fuller sense of the offense committed against him, and feel new anger at the transgressor. A king can only forgive a rebel for those acts of which he knows him to be guilty. Now the Lord knows all our sins. There is not a sin that has ever escaped His eyes. Those committed in the secret chamber, in the darkness of the night, those which never struggled into action—sins of the heart and imagination, those which have never been whispered into any human ear, God has known. What does He not see? And this is a blessed thing for us because it causes the pardon to cover fully the whole extent of the sin. A priest once said that if we did not remember all our sins and confess them, they would never be forgiven. Well, then, certainly they never will be forgiven, for no man can ever remember one thousandth part of his transgressions. But blessed be God, the pardon does not rest with *our* knowledge of the sin, but with *God’s* knowledge of the sin. And therefore that pardon is complete which comes from the all-seeing God. “I, even I, am He”—the Omniscient who is everywhere present, who saw you in the darkness, and heard your heart in all its evil speeches against the Most High—I, the all-knowing one, “I am He that blots out your transgressions.”

Oh, this unrivalled pardon, how full of consolation it is! Every attribute of God adds to its splendor. Every beam of the divine glory heightens its grandeur. When we think it is our Father Himself, our Father whom we have offended, who now kisses us with the kisses of His lips, and presses His penitent children to His bosom and says, “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions,” the pardon is rendered inestimably precious by the person from whom it comes.

2. Notice, next, *the reason why it is given*, the grounds upon which it is based, for they are profoundly comforting. “For My own sake.” The entire motive of God for forgiving sin lies within Himself—“For My own sake.” No man has his sins forgiven because they are little, for the smallest sin will ruin the soul, and every sin is great, however little it may seem to us. Each sin has the essence of rebellion in it, and rebellion is a great evil before God. No man, therefore, will have God say to him, “I have blotted out your sins because of the littleness of them.” Never!

Again, no man’s sin is forgiven on the ground that his repentance is meritorious. There is nothing in Scripture to warrant such an idea. Repentance precedes a sense of forgiveness in some measure, but it follows forgiveness in a larger measure. It is not the cause, though it is the attendant, of remission. God’s motive for pardoning a sinner is not because that sinner repents, for repentance of itself is no recompense to God. There is repentance, I think I had better call it remorse, which the lost feel in hell, but it changes not their doom. And had it not been for a Savior, we might have known the repentance which Esau felt when he went out and wept, but, nevertheless, lost the blessing—lost it irretrievably. Neither does our text tell us that God forgives men’s sins because He trusts that after they are forgiven they will do better. By His grace, forgiven men are made to do better, but it is not the foresight of any betterness on their part which leads God to the forgiveness. That cannot be a motive, for if they do better, their improvement is His work in them. Left to themselves, they would do even worse after they were pardoned than they had done before. And from the mercy of God they would argue immunity to sin, as, alas, too many which hold the truth in unrighteousness have already done. No, the only motive which God has for pardoning sinners, according to the text, is one which lies within Him—“for My own sake.”

And what, I pray you, is that motive? Brethren, the Lord knows all His motives, and it is not for us to measure them. But is it not, first, that He may indulge His mercy? Mercy is the last exercised, but the most pleasing to Himself, of all His attributes. Therefore, because He is full of mercy, He blots out sin. He has this motive, too, which is within Him, that He may glorify His Son, who is one with Himself. His Son has made atonement; has offered and presented it, and now, in order that He may have His full reward, the Lord delights to blot out the sins of those who come to Him. It is within Him that the motive lies. And what a comfort this is, for if, when looking into my soul, I cannot see any reason why God should save me, I need not look there, since the motive lies yonder, in His own gracious bosom. According to the multitude of His loving-kindnesses, He will blot out my transgressions. I may look to all my past life, and not discover a solitary action out of which I could make a plea for mercy. I may look to my present condition, and perceive not even a glimpse of improvement, or even a ray of hope that I shall be better in the future, but rather a dreadful fear that I shall grow worse and worse. And when I have seen these discouraging facts, I have only seen what the truth, for in itself, my case is deplorable, indeed. But this is my comfort—I may look right away from myself to God, yes, it is my duty to do so. O man, if God is to save you, it will not be because of anything you are, or ever will be. He must do it for His own sake. And, oh, how splendidly this sets the door of mercy open! It does not stand, now, upon the latch, that those may enter who are little sinners. But the great gate of grace stands wide open—what if I say nailed back to the wall? For what sinner is there whom God cannot pardon, if He pardons for His own sake and not for the sinner’s sake? What if the man were black with lusts which we dare not mention? What if he were red with murder? What if every crime in the catalog of guilt had been committed by him? Yet if God pardons, not because of anything He sees in the man, but because of what He finds in Himself, it remains a possibility for God to pardon the vilest of the vile, and the truth revealed in the Bible makes it certain that God will forgive such if they turn to Him, confess their transgressions, believe in His dear Son, and so pass from death unto life. How blessed, then, it is to look not only at the God who gives the pardon, but at the reason why He gives it—for His own sake!

3. And now, thirdly, it is noteworthy in this glorious text *how complete and universal the pardon is*. He does not say, “I, even I, am He that blots out *some* of your transgressions, and will not remember a *certain number* of your sins.” No, the Lord makes a clean sweep of the whole dreadful heap of our sins. They are all driven away at once by one stroke of almighty mercy. The text includes all the sins which the Lord had mentioned before—their buying Him no sweet cane with money—their refusing to attend to His sacrifices. Our *sins of omission* are all gone. Beloved friends, can any of us number our sins of omission? Those are the sins which ruin men. At the last great day the Judge will say, “I was hungry, and you gave Me no meat, I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink, sick, and you visited Me not.” Those on the left hand were not condemned for what they did do, but for what they did not do. And the things which we have not done—the things which we have left undone which we ought to have done—these are the majority of our sins. Who shall count them? They outnumber the sands of the ocean. Yet the divine pardon cleanses us from them all. No spot or wrinkle remains.

And then He mentions *actual sins*. He says, “You have made Me to serve with your sins.” [You have burdened Me with your sins.] But He declares that He blots them out, transgressions and sins, both forms of evil. They are both gone, all gone, wholly gone.

Now, I know not what particular sins may have been committed by the members of this congregation. Suppose we were to begin at yonder aisle, and each one had to stand up and acknowledge his sins? Well, it would take much time and we would have sinned a great deal more before we had come to the end of the confession. What a pile of sin there would be on this threshing floor, if every man were compelled to bring his own mass of sin, and pour it out upon the common heap. Yet the Lord does not set bound or measure, but says, “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions, and will not remember your sins.” All the believer’s sins are gone, and all are gone at once.

This is the very joy and glory of gospel absolution. The believer knows that his sins are not in the process of being pardoned, but *are* actually pardoned at this moment. No remnant of our sins remains to be dealt with in the future, the whole mass is put away. However black the guilt, however aggravated the criminality, however repeated the crime, however heinous because committed against the light, however enormous because perpetuated despite the Holy Spirit—they are all forever made an end of, annihilated, and forever gone when we believe in Jesus. Sins against God’s law, and Word, and day, sins against Christ’s blood, sins against His love, sins against His person, sins against His crown, sins against Himself in all His offices—an infinite variety of sins—they all vanish before that gracious declaration, “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions.”

Once more upon this point, the pardon is noteworthy on account of its being *most effectual*. It is described as blotting out. Now, blotting out is a very thorough way of settling a thing. If an account has been standing in the ledger a long time, and the pen is drawn through it, it remains no longer. Whether it is a large account or a small one, the same stroke of the pen will do it. If you owed a creditor a thousand pounds, and another owed him only ten, the word, “paid,” takes as many strokes of the pen to write for the one account as for the other, and it is just as easily done if the creditor is satisfied. Whatever sin there may have been in God’s people, when they come before Him, He writes, “Acquitted,” at the bottom of the page which is against them, and its condemning power is gone. What a joy it is to see the long catalog of my sins blotted out by the bleeding hands of Jesus, so that it cannot be read in the court of heavenly justice! What bliss to see it nailed to the cross of the dying Savior! Heavy as my soul’s debts were, I doubt no longer, now that I see the grim reckoning fastened to the bloody tree.

And then mark the wonderful expression, “I will not remember your sins.” Can God forget? Forgetting with God cannot be an infirmity as it is with us. We forget because our memory fails, but God forgets in the blessed sense that He remembers rather, the merit of His Son, than our sins. Indeed, God forgets sin in the sense of remembering that it is forgiven. I think it was Augustine who had been once a great sinner. After he was converted he was met in the street by one with whom he had often fallen into sin, and when she spoke to him and said, “Augustine, it is I,” he said, “Ah, but it is not I, I am dead, and made alive again.” Now, when God’s justice meets a man who believes in Jesus, that man is no longer, the *I*, that sinned, for that *I* is dead in Christ. “Know you not that we were crucified with Him? “The believer was buried with Christ, so that, as he that is dead is free from the law which condemned him—for

how shall the law arrest a dead man?—so we, being dead in Christ and risen again in Him, are new creatures, and do not come under the divine sentence. And God knows us not as sinners, but only, now, knows us as new creatures in Christ Jesus. He knows and recognizes in us the new life, having “Begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” That is one of the instructive features of the ordinance of baptism. The believer, there, sets forth the doctrine of salvation by death and burial. That was Noah’s salvation. He went into the ark as one dead to the world, he was buried in the ark, and then he floated out from the old world into the new. “The like figure,” says Peter, “whereunto baptism does also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” That is to say, baptism is a like figure of salvation, for it sets forth in a figure, and only in a figure, our death with Christ, our burial with Christ, our resurrection with Christ. Therefore where there is true faith, and the soul has communion with Christ, we are buried with Him in baptism unto death, “That like as Jesus rose from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also may rise to newness of life.” Death has passed upon us, “For we thus judge,” says the apostle, “that if one died for all, then all died”—(for such is the literal Greek)—and that He died for all, that they which live should not live from now on unto themselves, but unto Him that died for them, and rose again.” Well, then, beloved, if we are dead, I do not wonder that God says He does not remember our sins, for we are new creatures. We have passed from death to life. We have come into a new life, and God looks upon us from a new point of view. He regards us under a new aspect as members, not of the first Adam condemned and dead, but of the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, the living and the quickening Spirit. Well may He say to men who are new creatures, “I will not remember your sins.”

Every word of the text is delightful, and I cannot attempt to go into the fullness of it. May the Lord lead each one of you into it, and especially you young people. As for those who are not converted—oh, that they would long for the precious things here set forth! May God speak to some who came in here vile sinners, and say to them, “For My own sake I forgive you.” Oh, how you will leap for joy! What a thrill will go through your heart! You will not doubt the existence of God any more, I will guarantee you. You will have no more questions and quibbles. The Spirit of God will speak to your heart, and that will convince you, though nothing else will, and you will go away to glorify the grace you once despised.

II. Now I come to the consideration of the second point very briefly—THE EFFECT OF THIS PARDON WHEREVER IT COMES WITH POWER TO THE SOUL.

Timid persons have thought that the free pardon of sin would lead men to indulge in it. No doubt some are base enough to pervert it to that use, but there was never a soul that did really receive pardon from God who could find in that pardon any excuse for sin or any license to continue any longer in it. All God’s people argue thus—“Shall we sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, who are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” And again, the apostle says, “Shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.” He utters a most solemn disclaimer against the idea that the amazing mercy of God can lead the regenerate into sin.

The first effect of pardon upon the man who receives it *is surprise*. The man has been lying at the foot of the cross looking for mercy, and all of a sudden he glances at the bleeding Savior, and he is forgiven. And he feels something like Peter when he was brought out of prison. “He knew not that it was true that was done unto him by the angel, but thought he saw a vision.”—

*“When God revealed His gracious name,
And changed our mournful state,
Our rapture seemed a pleasing dream—
The grace appeared too great!”*

I recollect how overjoyed I was when I received pardon. I did not know how to contain myself for delight. But after a while this thought assailed me—such great mercy is too good to be true. My surprise at it staggered me. How could it be that I was actually forgiven, and through the blood of Jesus made clean in the sight of God? The goodness of God astounded me. It reminds me of an illustration I have used before, but it is a good one. If you have a dog at the table, and you throw him a scrap of meat, he swal-

lows it directly. But if you were to set the whole joint down on the floor before him, he would turn away. He would feel that you could not mean to give a fine joint of meat to a dog. He would not think of touching it, at least, few dogs wouldn't. And it seemed to me as if the Lord could not have meant all the wonders of His love for such a dog as I was. I was ready to turn away from it through the greatness of it. But then I remembered that it would not do for God to be giving little mercy. He was too great a God to spend all His power in pardoning little sinners, and granting little favors. And I came back to this—if His grace was not too big for Him to give, I would not be such a fool as to refuse it because of its greatness. You remember how Alexander told a soldier that he might have whatever he asked? The man went to the royal treasury, and demanded such a vast sum that the officer refused to let him have it, and said to him, "How can you be such an unconscionable fellow as to ask for so much?" When Alexander heard of it, he said, "It is much for him to receive, but it is not too much for Alexander to give—he has a high opinion of my greatness. Let him have what he has asked for. I will not fall short of his expectations." God is a great God, and to forgive great sins is just like Him. *We* cannot forgive at this rate, but God can. To forgive great sins, tremendous sins, unspeakably black sins, adds to His glory, and makes men say, "Who is a God like unto You, passing by iniquity, transgression, and sin?"

At first, then, mercy fills us with surprise. The next thing it does is to fill us with *holy regret*. We feel, "What? And is this the God I have been standing out against so long? Is this the God whom I have despised or neglected, whose gospel I put away from me, saying that there was time enough for me to attend to it when I grew old, and had seen a little of life? Is this the God whom I have been slighting, who has loved me at this rate, and given His dear Son from His own right hand to bleed and suffer in my place?" It has been said—I think by Aristotle—that a person cannot know that he is loved without feeling some degree of love in return. I am quite certain that you cannot know in your soul, by the experience of pardon, that God loves you, without feeling at once, "I am ashamed that I did not love my gracious God. I am disgusted with myself that I could have acted in such a disgraceful way towards Him. Did He love me before the world began? Did He write my name in the roll of His electing love? Did He ordain me to a crown of life, and to a harp of gold? Did He predestinate me to be conformed to the image of His Son? When the Savior bled, did He think of me as He was dying, and did He especially lay down life for me? Am I one whom He has betrothed unto Himself forever in faithfulness and love, and mercy? And yet have I been foolish enough to live all this while a stranger, and an enemy to Him?" When a sense of dying love comes mightily into the heart, we feel that we cannot be enough revenged upon our cruel hearts for having treated such a generous, such a forgiving God so.

As this sense of pardon first breeds surprise, and then intense regret, it next creates in us *fervent love*. "We love Him because He first loved us," and we love Him best of all for having pardoned us. No one loves God as much as the man or woman who has had much forgiven. Scripture tells us this in the case of the woman who was a sinner—she alone, washed the Savior's feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Commonplace Christians have never experienced any deep sense of sin, and consequently, Christ is a very commonplace Savior to them. Ah, but when a man feels that he is a vile sinner, and that he should have been in hell, and in the hottest part of it, if it had not been for sovereign grace, I tell you, sir, if the Lord lifts that man up out of the pit, and gives him a place among His servants, that is the man who will feel the water in his eyes when he talks about the Savior's grace. That man cannot speak about redeeming grace and dying love without feeling that there is charming music in those precious words and the best of all music in their precious sense. The viler the sinner, the more love has he to the Lord when he is forgiven. As he feels his sin, so He loves his Redeemer. "The burnt child dreads the fire," but I will tell you the child that dreads the fire most, if there could be a child which had burnt itself in the fire, and then all its sores and blisters were taken off it, and laid upon its mother, and that child saw its mother's face all scarred and marred with the burning, and saw her body in pain on her dear one's account, I am sure the child would hate all idea of playing with fire as long as it lived. Many suffer for sin in their own persons, but do not hate it. They will go back to the very sin which injured them, as moths fly again to the candle. But to see another suffering for my fault—such a one as Emmanuel, God with us—to see His hands fastened to the cross, and His feet pierced, and His heart gashed, and all His life flowing out in blood, and Himself bearing agonies unutterable for my sins, it makes me feel

that the very name of sin is accursed, and I utterly abhor it. We would, if we could, be perfect. We long and sigh, and cry to be delivered from everything that has one murderous spot of the Savior's blood upon it. If yonder knife had killed your friend, would you hoard it up, and think a great deal of the deadly instrument? You would hurl it out of your sight as an accursed thing. Yet sin slew Jesus! Sin slew Jesus! Away with it, then! Away with it! Away with it! My precious Christ was murdered by sin! From now on I am dead to sin! This is the spirit which free grace breeds in every Christian, and the surer he is of his pardon, the more intensely he hates his sin. Therefore our gospel is a reforming gospel, a sanctifying gospel. It is a gospel that delivers men from the power of sin, and brings them through the power of love into the blessed liberty of the children of God.

In closing, I would say to every unconverted person—your state before God is here in this picture. Many years ago in Russia a regiment of troops mutinied. They were at some distance from the capital, and were so furious that they murdered their officers, and resolved never to submit to discipline. But the emperor, who was an exceedingly wise and enlightened man, no sooner heard of it than, all alone and unattended, he went into the barracks where the men were drawn up, and, addressing them sternly, he said to them, "Soldiers, you have committed such offense against the law that every one of you deserves to be put to death. There is no hope of any mercy for any of you unless you lay down your arms immediately, and surrender at discretion to me, your emperor." And they did it, then and there, though the heads of their officers were lying at their feet. They threw down their arms and surrendered, and he said at once, "Men, I pardon you; you will be the bravest troops I ever had." And they were, too. That is just what God says to the sinner, "Now, sinner, you have done that which deserves My wrath. Down with your weapons of rebellion! Ground arms at once. I will not talk with you until you submit at discretion to My sovereign authority." And then He says, "Believe in My Son, trust Him, accept Him as your Savior. This done, you are forgiven, and from now on you will be the most loving creatures that My hands have made. You will love Me better than the angels, for though they never sinned, they never had a God to become incarnate and to bleed and die for them. You know what sin is, and will hate it, and you know what goodness is, for you have seen it in My Son, and from now on you will strive to be like Him, and among the sweetest notes that shall come up to My throne will be your grateful songs."—

*"Blessings, forever on the Lamb,
Who bore the curse for wretched men!
Let angels sound His sacred name,
And every creature say, 'Amen!'"*

None will more loudly sing the praises of God than those who have been washed in the precious blood, and have had their transgressions blotted out.

The Lord bless you, and allow every one of you to know and taste all this, and that, too, at this very hour if it is His will, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 43:22-28, 44:1-22.

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